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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000252

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [NI](#) [ECOWAS](#)  
SUBJECT: ECOWAS: DIARRA ON DAKAR, LIBERIA, NIGER/ACRI, EUCOM  
REF: STATE 2975

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[11.](#) (U) This is an action message; see para 12.

[12.](#) (C) SUMMARY: During a January 24 call on the Ambassador, ECOWAS Deputy Executive Secretary Diarra gave a brief read-out from the ECOWAS Summit in Dakar, positively describing additional funding and staffing for the Peace and Security Department. Diarra sought the Ambassador's advice on the upcoming EUCOM visit dealing with the creation of an OpsCenter for ECOWAS. Diarra noted the Nigerien Government had sought ECOWAS assistance to join ACRI. On Liberia, Diarra agreed the venue of the first meeting on Liberian reconciliation should be outside the country to ensure wide attendance and to avoid manipulation by President Taylor. At the ECOWAS Summit, Liberia extracted a pledge from the other summiteers to condemn LURD activity in Lofa County as illegal attacks against a duly constituted government. The ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council will consider sanctions against the LURD at its next meeting. END SUMMARY.

[13.](#) (C) On January 24, ECOWAS Deputy Executive Secretary Cheikh Diarra, accompanied by Military Advisor Colonel M. Dixon Dikio called on Ambassador Jeter. PolCounselor and PolMilOff also attended.

[14.](#) (C) DAKAR OUTCOMES: Surprised that we had not yet received the Dakar communiquis, Diarra promised to forward them soon (he did the next day). He described Dakar positively. Regarding the new ECOWAS Chairman, President Wade, Diarra quipped, "We are happy and we are concerned." If possessed of the requisite political will, Wade was uniquely placed to make a positive difference by bridging the gap between ECOWAS and UEMOA in the areas of economic integration, Diarra believed. In a brief aside with PolCouns after the meeting, Diarra worried that there had been no contact between Wade and the ECOWAS Secretariat since the Dakar Summit. He hoped that this did not presage inattention to ECOWAS by Wade.

[15.](#) (C) Meanwhile, Diarra noted that the ECOWAS budget had been approved. He had been instructed to complete recruitment for his Department, including the OpsCenter, by June. At Dakar, the Heads-of-State had also committed to fully implement the community levy. (COMMENT: We assume that Diarra meant the .5 percent customs levy that ECOWAS countries are now required to pay to support the Conflict Resolution Mechanism. END COMMENT.) Since only four or five countries were current, this commitment, if implemented by members, would make a big difference in ECOWAS' ability to fund its projects and plans, he said.

[16.](#) (C) MONITORING STABILITY: Diarra described the collection and analysis process in mind for ECOWAS. The OpsCenter should be able to collect, analyze and disseminate information. Additionally, it would contain a military planning and operations cell for peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance activities. Thus far, directors of the four zonal monitoring stations (Banjul, Cotonou, Monrovia, and Ouagadougou) had been hired, and staff for the stations had been nominated. However, the staff needed training in analyzing data and trends, and he expected the West Africa Regional Program (WARP) agreement signed last year would provide this assistance, though he was waiting for a response from WARP. Funding to equip the monitoring stations themselves was being provided by the EU, but this support also had not yet materialized. Additionally, the EU had appointed a Belgian advisor to ECOWAS for three years to assist with coordinating EU support. ECOWAS had also sourced an electronic map and database system, modeled after the UN's system, from a company called Rectas (based at Obafemi

Awolowo University in Ibadan). Ideally, the monitoring center would eventually be connected to the national security systems in each member country, in addition to the monitoring stations.

17. (C) EUCOM VISIT: Diarra emphasized that he wanted to make sure the EUCOM team, coming for further discussions on communications assistance for the OpsCenter, received briefings from the Rectas team and the EU Advisor, and that the visit was fruitful. Ambassador Jeter emphasized that Diarra and his team should make sure they had a clear picture of what they wanted, and communicate their vision for the OpsCenter to the EUCOM team. Diarra stated that they wanted to be able to communicate with the governments of members-states, zonal monitoring stations, and any ECOWAS Force Commanders in the event of future ECOWAS peacekeeping operations. Ambassador Jeter said that he was unsure that funding for monitoring stations would be likely, particularly for Monrovia and Ouagadougou, given the destabilizing roles that Taylor and Campaore had played in the region and their involvement in the illicit diamond trade. For now, the Ambassador said, it might be better to think in terms of communications linkages between ECOWAS headquarters and those states that had been consistent contributors to ECOWAS operations. Diarra understood, noting that the Taylor government had been less than helpful to ECOWAS in locating an appropriate building for the monitoring station in Monrovia or in allowing the establishment of an ECOWAS radio station there.

18. (C) RECONCILING LIBERIA: ECOWAS was working with the Carter Center to arrange for a Liberian reconciliation conference. The process had moved in fits and starts, as President Taylor had first supported the idea of a meeting outside Liberia but then reversed course to insist that Monrovia be the venue. Diarra agreed that a conference outside of Liberia was needed to ensure inclusive attendance and to prevent manipulation of the event by Taylor.

19. (C) Diarra went on to note that in Dakar, the GOL had requested ECOWAS to condemn the LURD incursions in Lofa County as an illegal attempt to seize power through extra-constitutional means. (Comment: Such a request coming from Taylor, is laced with irony. Twelve years ago, Taylor was in the LURD's shoes and he considered ECOWAS a harmful interloper - now he wants to use it as a shield. End Comment.) After reviewing a GOL report on the LURD, the Mediation and Security Council will consider sanctions against the LURD at its next meeting. The Council would likely support some kind of sanctions, such as travel restrictions, against members of the LURD. Dikio, describing his last visit to Lofa County, characterized the area as a "collection of rejects from the sub-region," (RUF, various mercenaries, Guinean dissidents, Burkinabe and maybe even some renegade Nigerians!) and agreed that Liberia's stability needed to be watched closely, particularly so that trouble there does not undermine hard won progress in Sierra Leone

110. (C) NIGER AND ACRI: Diarra revealed that he had received a letter from the Government of Niger, asking for support from ECOWAS to join ACRI (In fact, Embassy Niamey made this case in Niamey 1827). Ambassador Jeter noted that ACRI was undergoing review in Washington and that it remained unclear what shape ACRI would take. Meanwhile, we would pass the message to Washington.

111. (C) COMMENT: Generally pleased with the outcome of the Dakar Summit, Diarra seemed charged to move his Department forward in 2002. Diarra is focussing on the establishment of the ECOWAS OpsCenter. EUCOM will find him cooperative, and we believe this project could significantly improve ECOWAS capacity in conflict prevention. Meanwhile, incoming ECOWAS Executive Secretary Mohammed Ibn Chambas is due to start work the first week of February. His predecessor Lansana Kouyate will finish at ECOWAS in mid-February. We hope the overlap will not only give them a chance to have a smooth exchange of the baton, but will allow Ambassador Jeter to meet with them simultaneously, ensuring continuity in our working relationship with the Secretariat.

112. (C) ACTION REQUEST: As Kouyate prepares to leave and Chambas prepares to take over the helm of the ECOWAS Secretariat, letters from Washington (from the Assistant

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secretary or from Secretary Powell himself) congratulating

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Kouyate on a job well-done and pledging our continuing support for the new Executive Secretary would be appropriate.

This gesture would symbolize our strong engagement with ECOWAS and our hopes for the future of the organization. The Embassy will propose text for the suggested letter, which will be forwarded to AF/W. END ACTION REQUEST.  
Jeter